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Macedonia: The governing party wins the parliamentary elections

The right-wing coalition VMRO-DPMNE led by Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski won the early parliamentary elections held on 5 June and is likely to form a majority government with its present coalition partner, the Democratic Union for Integration (BDI), which received the greatest level of support among the Albanian minority. This was the first incident-free election and, according to a preliminary opinion from the OSCE mission, it complied with democratic standards.

According to exit poll results, VMRO-DPMNE received 39% of the votes and 55 of the 123 seats in parliament. The level of support for the opposition SDSM party reached 32.7%, thus allowing it to gain more than double the number of seats it had previously (an increase from 18 to 43). Although VMRO-DPMNE has won, its result is worse than it was after the previous elections and its advantage over SDSM has clearly lessened (in 2008 it was 63% against 27%). The Democratic Union for Integration (BDI) won among the Albanian minority, which accounts for approximately 25% of the country's population, strengthening its advantage (10.2%) over its competitor, the Democratic Party of Albanians (5.9%). The diaspora was allowed for the first time to elect three representatives. Turnout reached 63.6%.

The early elections put an end to a political dispute ongoing since January this year resulting from parliament's work being boycotted by almost all opposition parties, which have accused the prime minister of authoritarian tendencies and restricting the freedom of the media. The elections were to confirm public support for the Gruevski-led government. However, this goal has not been achieved. The new government is unlikely to resolve the main problems of Macedonia: its bad economic situation (high unemployment rate of approximately 30% and slow GDP growth: 1% in 2010) and the deadlock the process of the country's integration with the EU and NATO, which has been blocked by Greece demanding that Skopje change the constitutional name of the country. Encouraged by increasing public support, the opposition will be a difficult opponent for the government and will be making efforts to cause elections to be held early again. <MarSz>